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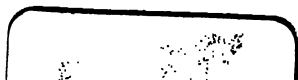
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THE
MYSTERIOUS VOICE

WITH OTHER

TALES AND ALLEGORIES:

WRITTEN FOR HER PUPILS

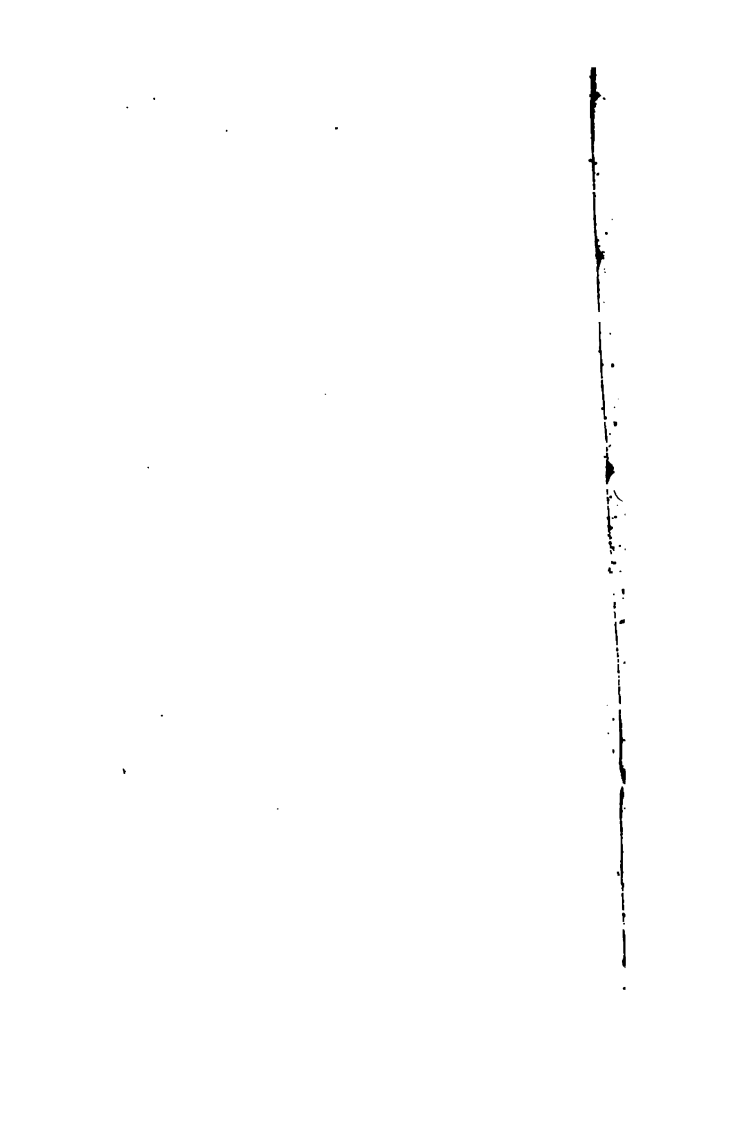
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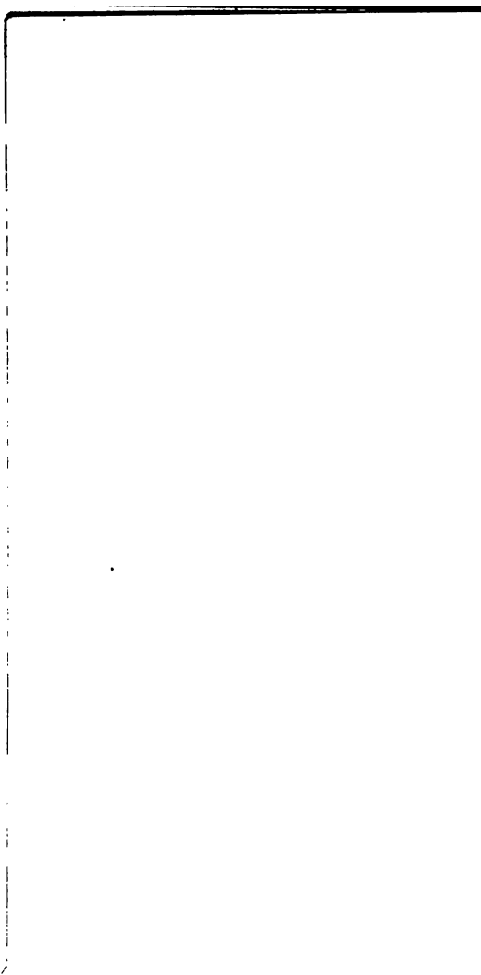
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THE LAST DAY AT SCHOOL;

OR,

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE.

A TALE.

NEAR the beautiful village of Tunbridge Wells, in Kent, was a select boarding-school, conducted by Mrs. Prudence, who took a limited number of young ladies. Mrs. Prudence was a lady of experience and wisdom, who, while instructing her pupils in every branch of education that could make them welcome in society, had not forgotten to endeavour to impress on their youthful minds the *one thing needful*, without which all the accomplishments in this

world were less than nothing and vanity. But, unfortunately, youth is frivolous, presumptuous, and vain; and, like a silly dove, will easily be allured into the snare of worldly attractions, which the fowler has skilfully strewed with the enticing baits of pleasure and flattery; which, seconded by self-love, indolence, resistance to good, inclination to evil, pride, the love of superiority, dislike for humility, and such like things, will, like the rattlesnake's glittering eyes, draw with irresistible power the simple victims, who become an easy prey by setting their eyes upon them, instead of turning them away. But, to begin my story, I must bring my young readers to a very important time in the annals of school—that is, the last day before the Christmas holidays—a time so delightfully anticipated by all young people who have a beloved home and circle of friends to welcome them.

It was evening : Mrs. Prudence, whose custom it was every half year to accompany the young ladies to town, where their parents generally met them and took them to their respective homes, was busily engaged with Miss Goodwill, the governess, in preparing for the next day's journey. The young ladies, thus left to themselves, collected round the fire, and, *pour passer le tems*, considered the past, present, and future. As the present was only pleasant by the anticipation of the future, they slightly touched upon it; but the past, being more connected with their enjoyments to come, they began with that.

I wonder what improvement we have made in the half year just finished ? said a giddy girl of fourteen ; as for me, I have learnt a little of all sorts ; but, for an independent spirit like mine, it is rather a difficult task to be *obliged* to do. I think, if I had had my own

way, I should have done much better. No doubt about that! said a pretty girl of eighteen who was going to leave school;—you would have played all day—would you not? O! I do not regret my having been *obliged* to do: I am now well repaid for my trouble. Mr. B—flat is quite *en extase* when I perform some overture on the piano; and Monsieur Saute-Pierrot, our dancing-master, says I surpass everybody *en légèreté, en élégance, en grâce*. I know also enough of everything connected with education to be able to converse on any subject. O! I am not afraid of passing unnoticed in the world. I quite long to be introduced, that, at the many parties I am already invited, dear mamma may see her kindness has not been bestowed upon me in vain. How delightful it will also be to enjoy the congratulation and admiration of our friends! O, I am very well pleased with my past

labours ! So it seems ! said a third who had listened to her rather impatiently ; I wish you may not be disappointed in your expectation ; for something else besides music and dancing is required to our happiness : an amiable temper is a great blessing to those who possess it ; and this has been my principal aim this half year. There is something very sweet in a lovely, gentle, obliging, meek, and cheerful disposition ; in lady-like manners, and engaging conversation, which will attract a more constant attention than a fine concerto or a polka, which last but a few minutes. Papa will be delightfully surprised to see my great improvement ; and I know it will not create a little sensation in our family circle. O, Christmas ! Christmas ! I am almost beside myself when I think of thy happy return ! To-morrow, to-morrow, we shall be gone ! *Boast not*

thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth, said a voice which struck terror into the young party. Who's that speaking? cried they all at once. O, I dare say it is somebody who wants to frighten us, said one; but we are not so easily frightened: let us resume our examination. I have not much to boast of in the way of learning, said Polly Careless; we have so much to do, so few leisure hours, and to get up so early, that I am always tired, and glad to get over my lessons as fast as I can to enjoy a little rest. I quite long for the holidays to give again also a free course to my tongue. However, I think, I have improved in my singing. Madame Rossignol says my voice is exquisite and is very much like Madame Malibran's. Poor Madame Malibran! I should not like to be like her, though; for she was cut off, as an opening rose, in the midst

.

of the applause and adulation of a fascinated public who flocked to hear the melodious sounds which proceeded from the silvery strings of her mellifluous throat ! Sad was her death ! But there is no fear of my being like her. If I become a celebrated singer, it will be among a private circle of friends. But that cannot prevent your dying like her, interrupted one of them. No !—but there would be a difference, though ; she did not know anything of religion, and I do. And what is the use of your knowledge of it, if you do not practise it ? Why, I have plenty of time yet : it would be very ridiculous if I were going home like a nun or a methodist, finding fault with everything that my friends do—such as going to balls, theatres, parties, &c. We go to church on Sundays, and have family prayer sometimes, and talk on religious subjects ; and I think that is enough for the pre-

sent : when I am old, or come to a death-bed, I shall act differently. *Boast not thyself of old age or a death-bed, for thou knowest not whether thou shalt come to either*, said the same mysterious voice. Who can that be speaking ? exclaimed the terrified girls. That voice is very strange ! Angela ! how pale you look ! What is the matter ? That voice, replied Angela, trembling, reminds me of an awful event. What is it ?—tell us : do tell us what it is, said they all, drawing close to her. Three years ago, said Angela, my sister was bride's-maid to the very accomplished Lady Arabella —, her intimate friend, possessing everything that could make one happy —beauty, riches, talents, the most amiable and generous disposition. Lady Arabella was beloved by everyone that approached her. Was she religious, too ? thoughtlessly interrupted little Amy, who was listening very atten-

tively. As much as a person of her rank could be, answered Angela. That was like the rich young man then, I suppose ? said again the little girl. I wish you would be quiet and let Angela speak, roughly said her neighbour, who was annoyed with the child's remarks. Well, resumed Angela, the evening before she was to be married, my sister and I were with her, preparing and admiring her bridal attire, while Lady Arabella, with her elbow on the table and her chin resting on her hand, was talking about her anticipated happiness ; and, with her eyes beaming with delight, she exclaimed, To-morrow, this time, I shall be far away ; and yet I shall be very happy ! When, suddenly, we were startled by such a voice as the one we have just heard, saying, *Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.* She turned deadly pale ; but, soon re-

covering herself, and thinking it to be her brother, she said—Naughty Ernest, he will tease to the very last by telling me that there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip; but I am sure of Sir Francis, and to-morrow will prove that we are not always deceived.

The next morning we accompanied them to church: it was one of the most splendid weddings that could be imagined—joy beamed on every face. After partaking of a superb *déjeuner*, Sir Francis accompanied his lovely bride into the carriage, which, followed by two others, took the road to Southampton, whence they were to embark for the continent. After having proceeded some miles, they came to a wooden bridge across a rapid river, when, the horses taking fright at some object, suddenly became unmanageable; and, rushing with violence against the side of the bridge, precipitated the car-

riage into the river. The window having been broken, the water soon found its way into it, and, notwithstanding the speedy assistance that was procured, they were both taken up for dead. However, after some considerable efforts to restore animation, Sir Francis began to show some signs of life ; but the unfortunate Lady Arabella, having received a severe contusion in the head, only opened her eyes to cast a farewell look on her disconsolate husband, who repeated with anguish the last words of his beloved bride when clinging to him in their fall—*Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day, or a minute, may bring forth !*

How strange ! said one : how awful ! said another. That reminds me, said a third, of a similar circumstance that took place some years ago at Rochester. A wedding-party were enjoying an ex-

cursion on the water, when the boat struck against some piles placed for the repairs of the bridge, and they were all drowned.* O dear! said a little girl, and do you remember the bridge at Yarmouth which gave way, precipitating into the water three hundred persons who had assembled to see a man in a tub drawn by two geese? † I hope nothing will happen to us, said several. But what could happen by to-morrow? said others. Why, the house may be set on fire—some thieves may come in • and murder us—and many other things we do not think of. I shall be afraid to go to bed, said a timid one. Let us all sleep together, *courageously* suggested another: we shall have more power to resist the evil that may come. Then, we must make the floor our bed to get room enough for all, said another

* A fact.

† Occurred in about 1843.

laughing. O, don't laugh, said they: here is a good idea! We may easily sleep three in a bed: take the room with three beds—that will do for nine of us: the adjoining one has two—that will be for six. Well! but we are sixteen—one will be left out. I do not mind sleeping alone, said Matilda: my heart is too full of joy to find room for fear, and the idea of seeing again my beloved father, after an absence of ten years in the West Indies, will keep away evil thoughts from disturbing my rest. Is your father returned? asked one of her companions. He must be now; for I had a letter from mamma yesterday, telling me the ship was expected the day before, and that she was going to Portsmouth to meet my father, and that both would be ready to welcome me on my arrival; so you may think how impatient I am to behold the return of the day.

Mrs. Prudence, who let them have pretty much their own way on the last day, did not take particular notice of their new fancy ; and Miss Goodwill, taking pity on Matilda, gladly offered to share her bed with her. All, then, being settled, the young ladies went to bed ; and, notwithstanding their previous fears, slept soundly till broad daylight the next morning, delighted, on their opening their eyes, to find themselves alive and safe and sound, and that the house had neither been broken open or burnt.

A bright frosty morning was promising a fine day, and the beams of the rising sun scattering the vanishing mist, which was yet faintly diffused over the horizon, did not a little contribute to the cheerfulness of the joyful party, who began then hastily to prepare for their approaching departure. What a delightful morning this is ! How we shall

enjoy our journey ! said one of them. And particularly the end, replied another, when we shall meet our friends. Come ! let us make haste : the omnibus will be here in an hour to take us to the station, and we have not breakfasted yet. I hope we shall meet with no accident, said a timid little girl—I do not at all like the tunnels we have to go through : they are so long and so dark ! There is nothing to fear, said one who thought herself wiser : we do not want to trouble our joy with evil that may never come—it is enough to think of it when it is come ; and, no doubt, we shall get as safely to our journey's end as we beheld the morning after our night's dread and fear.

While they were thus talking, laughing, anticipating, and packing up the few things that remained, they were startled by a loud shriek proceeding from Miss Goodwill's room, and on

hearing Mrs. Prudence calling out for a bottle of salts they ran to enquire what was the matter. On their entering the room, they found Matilda lying on the floor like a corpse, and Miss Goodwill supporting her head. What has happened to Matilda? asked they. Mrs. Prudence, said Miss Goodwill, has been for some time preparing her for melancholy news. A letter came this morning from one of her mother's friends from the Isle of Wight, announcing that the ship, which had been expected at Portsmouth, had been detained at the back of the island by the tide and roughness of the sea; and, as her passengers were to land there, her mamma, and those who expected some friends by her, immediately resorted to the place; but after having being tossed about the greater part of the night, to the great anxiety of those who waited for her arrival, she at last struck against the

rocks between five and six o'clock in the morning, when all the crew and passengers were lost, except a little ship-boy who was found two hours after fixed between two rocks;* and Matilda's mamma, being in an unfit state to return home, wishes her to remain here for the present. Poor Matilda! exclaimed her companions—O, the poor girl! How little she expected such news, even last night when she was so fearless. What will become of her! How soon our enjoyments may be damped! O mysterious voice, was it for her thou didst speak? Yet, it was not addressed to her. Well may she now say—“*Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*”

After some time Matilda recovered

* Wreck of the *Clarence* which occurred about 1839 or 1840.

her senses, but it was to give way to a frantic despair.

The time for departure having now come, the young ladies went to take a sympathising leave of their bereaved friend; when Angela and Amy begged Mrs. Prudence to allow them to remain with Miss Goodwill to comfort poor Matilda. Mrs. Prudence, at first, remonstrated against their remaining, as it would be a disappointment to their parents; but, replied Amy, are we not commanded to weep with them that weep, and to comfort the afflicted? Angela and I can very well go by the first train to-morrow. I know, said Angela, mamma will not be angry with me for remaining, for she has too well inculcated in me the maxim—"Do to others as you would others do to you;" and, were I in such a case, I feel I should stand in need of sympathy. As the time was now pressing, Mrs. Pru-

dence consented to the young ladies' wishes; and, the other party, wiping their tears, went into the omnibus, and gradually forgot the house of mourning as they were going far from it and drawing nearer to their wished-for homes.

Mrs. Prudence was expected back by the returning train at seven o'clock; but hour after hour passed away after the set time, and Mrs. Prudence did not return. Anxiety became visible on the countenances of the small party; each was afraid of communicating her fears lest she should increase her neighbour's, and particularly Matilda's whose spirits were already cast down. Night went on: with difficulty Miss Goodwill persuaded her young companions to take some rest, though she did not herself retire, listening to every sound. The morning found her still waiting—eight, nine, ten o'clock—no news! At last,

at eleven, they heard a coach draw slowly to the door: they all hastened down stairs to welcome their dear governess and enquire the cause of the delay; but at the appalling sight that struck their eyes they shrunk back. Mrs. Prudence, for it was herself, was so disfigured that they scarcely knew her: she was wrapped up in a blanket, and with much care carried up-stairs.

Their terror can be more easily conceived than described when, enquiring of the coachman, they heard that the train, which conveyed the late merry youthful party, had met with a dreadful accident two miles beyond the tunnel, by which many of the passengers had lost their lives. Among them were seven of the elder young ladies of Mrs. Prudence's school, who were together in one carriage; Mrs. P. being in another with the six younger ones, four of whom were in a very precarious state, and two

slightly injured ; and, though Mrs. Prudence had received such severe contusions, yet the doctor gave hope of her recovery.

After having received this information, Miss Goodwill went to give her assistance to Mrs. Prudence, and her younger companions retired to a separate room to give free course to their grief. As for Matilda, overcome by this double stroke, she exclaimed, with a low, mournful voice : Dead ! dead ! and they also are dead who yesterday only were so beaming with joy ! What has become of the hope which made them so happy ? Where are the youth, beauty, talents, from which they expected so many years of enjoyment in this fleeting, transitory life ? They are gone—gone for ever ! O death ! death ! Thus thou defeatest the purposes of men ! The king on the throne, the

beggar on the dunghill, the statesman and the artizan, old age and youth, are all equally subject to thy stroke ! Why have I been spared ? Why did I not go with my young friends ? I should not have now to mourn for my father ! But, where should I be ? Where are they now themselves ? O awful thought ! summoned at a moment's notice before the great tribunal ! Forgive ! O thou all merciful, forgive my murmurings ! My head is now sunk beneath the waters, but thou wilt raise it up again ; and, when purified by this fiery trial, may the remainder of my days be ever devoted to thy glory ! O, my dear friends, may this teach us more and more that this world is not our resting-place, and that, if we have been spared, it is not to run after the few transitory pleasures thinly scattered in this land of sorrow ; but to remember our high

calling, and join the disciples of the Lord in the great work of the salvation of souls ; not forgetting that we are to work while it is called *to-day* ; since "*we cannot boast of to-morrow, not knowing what a day may bring forth.*"

THE HISTORY OF MATILDA.

PART I.—THE MOURNING.

THE next day, the parents of Angela and Amy came over to fetch their children ; and, with deep feelings of gratitude, they returned thanks to the Almighty for having so mercifully spared them ; for, being religious people, they knew that every blessing came from an overruling Providence, too often, alas ! overlooked by the many, who attribute to an imaginary chance the different events that befall them. Angela's mamma invited Matilda to come with them ; but Matilda, too much absorbed in her affliction, preferred waiting in solitude the return of her mother, and,

after weeping together for some time, her two young friends took their leave, having made her promise to come and see them when she went to town.

As is natural to those who are labouring under great depression, when the heart is not yet hardened by unbelief or blinded by the world, Matilda, left alone, sought for comfort in religion, and poured out her sorrows and tears in the bosom of Him whose ear is ever open to the cry of the afflicted; and, feeling somewhat relieved, she went to assist Miss Goodwill in her attendance on Mrs. Prudence, who was gradually recovering, and who had resolved, on her restoration, to give up her school, and to retire to some secluded spot on the continent, where she might forget the painful occurrence, and spend the remainder of her days in diffusing the light of the Gospel among some of the poorer classes who are yet

wrapped up in the dark cloud of ignorance and superstition.

As for Matilda, her sorrows were not ended: a week after she had received the melancholy information of her father's death, she heard from the same friend, from the Isle of Wight, that her mamma, unable to bear the sudden stroke which had at once bereaved her of her husband and fortune, was fast sinking under a brain fever which was likely to take her away also, unless some unexpected change should take place; and she was desired to come over without delay, as her presence might, perhaps, produce a salutary effect. So, poor Matilda, after bidding a last farewell to Mrs Prudence and Miss Goodwill, took her departure, and arrived at the Isle of Wight, where she found her mother laying in a state of insensibility, which made her fear her end was approaching.

My mother! my mother! cried the almost distracted girl: will you also leave me? Has your sorrow made you forget that you have a child left? Spare, O spare my mother! cried she, falling on her knees, and lifting up to heaven her hands, and her eyes streaming with tears; and then, dropping her head on her mother's couch, she sobbed in silence, when a gentle touch made her raise her head, and she beheld her mother, who had been roused by her voice, pensively looking at her, as if trying to bring back some recollection to her mind. Mamma, said Matilda, pressing her mother's hand to her lips, I am your Matilda. Matilda! said the invalid—O my poor child—thy father is gone! and covering her face with her hands she wept bitterly, which was considered as a favourable symptom, as it proved she was getting over her delirium, and the fever was greatly abated;

however, exhausted, she fell asleep for some hours, and from that time began to recover.

What will become of us ? said Lady Samford one day to her daughter, as she was sitting by her ; for, with your father, we have also lost our fortune. Fear not, dear mamma, said Matilda. He who is the Father of the fatherless is also the Husband of the widow : if He has spared our lives hitherto, He will also provide for us. As soon as you are well enough, let us go to your pretty little country seat, near Richmond : if you can no more enjoy the splendour you have been accustomed to, there at least, in a quiet and retired life, we shall find more peace and happiness than we ever did in the world and its boisterous enjoyments. You are right, my dear, said Lady Samford. I readily give up the world and its pleasures, which have lost their charm to

me ; and I will, away from all, end my days in mourning for him I have lost.

About a fortnight this conversation had taken place, Lady Samford, with her daughter, left the Isle of Wight, the scene of her sorrow ; and, after settling her affairs in town, retired to her beautiful villa, taking with her her lady's-maid only and two servants. Matilda made it her principal study to comfort her mother in every way she could, and to make her cherish her solitude by her kind and amiable disposition and her devoted attention to all her wishes ; not forgetting, at the same time, to improve the various talents and accomplishments she had acquired at Mrs. Prudence's, and, above all, to cultivate in her heart the precious seed which had been so wonderfully sown. She often saw her dear companions, Angela and Amy, which contributed greatly to her enjoyment, and

took also pleasure in visiting and teaching the poor: she was thus spending her days in joy, peace, and happiness, when a circumstance took place which put an end to her favourite pursuits.

Sorrow, like pleasure, rolls away in its turn with the unceasing wheel of time, and when the storm of affliction has gone down, the reviving beams of hope will again pierce through, and dissipate the dark clouds which seemed to threaten the heart with everlasting night.

Two years after her retirement, Lady Samford began to feel wearied with her solitude, and the desire of revisiting her friends revived again in her heart: therefore, yielding to the pressing invitation of a rich elderly aunt she had in Warwickshire, she communicated to Matilda her wish to prepare for an immediate journey. This was rather sad news to Matilda, who foresaw no good

from this intended visit, which would lead her into the world ; but with her accustomed submission she complied with her mother's wishes, concealing, as well as she could, the fear this change excited in her heart. All signs of mourning were now put away, and a first-rate dressmaker was sent for from town to do away with the rustic appearance of two years of seclusion.

The day had arrived when they were to leave their lovely solitude which had become so dear to Matilda; and the new scene which was now opening before her filled her heart with doubts and fears. What is the matter, my dear, said Lady Samford to her daughter as they were riding along ; you seem cast down and dejected ? Dear mamma, said Matilda, I do not like the idea of going into the world. I was so happy in our lovely retreat that I I do not like the world either, my dear, in-

interrupted Lady Samford, but there are some points of etiquette to which we are sometimes obliged to conform ; and, in our circumstances, I could not again refuse my aunt's invitation. Besides, you must consider you are now entering your nineteenth year, and that your youth and talents is the only fortune you possess: therefore, it is necessary for you to see a little of the world, as, with the credit of my aunt, who no doubt intends bequeathing her fortune to you, you may be able to form an alliance suitable to your rank, and it is particularly on your account I have undertaken this journey. O, my dear mamma, replied Matilda, I wish I had known it ! I would have begged of you to let us remain in our sweet abode at Richmond, I was so happy there with you ; and, if I am ever to marry, I do not wish to choose a partner from high life. My dear, said Lady Samford, you

are too young yet to discern what is for your good. I have more experience of the world than you, and I have no doubt you will one day thank me for my present proceedings. Be very kind and attentive to our aunt and.....The carriage then entering the long avenue which led to the Hon. Mrs. Mansfield's mansion put an end to the conversation, and in a few minutes they were in the presence of their aunt who welcomed them with heartfelt joy. Here you are at last, said she—I really thought you could never be persuaded to come out again. I am very glad to see you ; now, consider this house as your home. I have given orders that your wishes be strictly attended to, and I hope the change of air and scene will soon revive your spirits, and dissipate the melancholy which is still impressed on your countenances. O, my dear aunt, said Lady Samford, with a deep

sigh, my heart has received a severe wound ! True, said Mrs. Mansfield, wiping away a sympathising tear ; but it is one of those decrees of nature over which we have no control, and it is unreasonable to pine away in solitude for that which cannot be remedied, and to neglect the living for the dead. After Lady Samford had shed a few tears on the past, Matilda on the future, and the aunt on what she considered the mutual cause, they all retired to their respective apartments.

When Matilda found herself alone she gave way to her restrained feelings, and falling on her knees she exclaimed —“ O thou, who knowest the sincerity and the weakness of my heart, save me from the temptations which are going to assail me, or help me to bear them ! Thou once delivered my soul from death—O deliver now my feet from falling ! Thou art my only refuge, my

strength, my guide—I have no one here to sympathise with me; but thou art ever present with them who put their trust in thee.” Feeling comforted by this short prayer, Matilda prepared for dinner, and met her aunt with a smiling face. But, why was Matilda so unhappy?—some of my young readers will, perhaps, enquire—I see nothing to make her miserable. Why, my dear young friends, when the love of God is in the heart it will make conscience very tender, and feel very acutely every thing likely to offend Him; and Matilda, who had been so wonderfully preserved, and who had had such a terrible warning, was at once actuated by love, fear, and gratitude.

Matilda’s naturally gentle, affectionate, and amiable disposition, joined to a well-informed mind and entertaining conversation, soon captivated Mrs. Mansfield, who thought of making

her grand-niece the sole heiress of her fortune, and treating her as her own child. Matilda was no less fond of her aunt, who treated her with much kindness, and whom, in her turn, she delighted to please, to the great satisfaction of Lady Samford, who viewed in this reciprocal attachment the restoration of her fortune. Well, thought Matilda one morning as she was finishing dressing—how thankful I am my fears were groundless! My aunt is certainly not the worldly person I thought her to be: we have now been here two months, and I have only seen a few private friends. I really think I shall enjoy my time here very much. When she went down to breakfast she observed a particular satisfaction in the eyes of her aunt, who, when the meal was over, called her into her room; and watching with anticipated pleasure the delightful expression of surprise which

she expected the agreeable information she was going to communicate to her niece would produce on her smiling countenance, said — My dear, your mamma and I have concerted together a little surprise for you, which, I think, will afford you as much pleasure as we have had in contriving it. Since your arrival here I have refrained receiving company, thinking that, after your long seclusion from the world, you would not like to go into it again at once; but my love for you, which makes me look upon you as my own daughter, leads me also to treat you as such; and, therefore, I wish your first introduction into the world should be at my house, and this very evening I give in your honour one of the most splendid balls I ever gave: above one hundred and fifty invitations have been sent and accepted. I expect most of the nobility for several miles round, and as it

will be very brilliant I wish my beautiful niece to surpass every body in beauty and elegance, and I have sent to London for your toilette, which is now in your dressing-room waiting for your inspection. Matilda was so struck at the sudden and unexpected news that she remained speechless and motionless: her feelings for her aunt's kindness—her reluctance to go to a ball—and her dread of incurring the Lord's displeasure, caused a struggle within her which she could not conceal. Well, my dear, said her aunt looking at her with astonishment, you do not seem to receive my information with the pleasure I expected. My dear aunt, said Matilda with emotion, I feel your kindness with heartfelt gratitude; but excuse me from participating in the pleasures of the world. I ought not—I cannot do it! What! said her aunt with increased surprise, and a bitter expression of

wounded pride and disappointment, you would not, I hope, expose me to the shame of saying to the numerous assembly I expect this evening for your sake, I have invited you to welcome an ungrateful niece who despises my kindness and rejects it with contempt! O my dear aunt, said Matilda, bursting into tears, do not speak to me thus—you will break my heart! I am not ungrateful. I greatly appreciate your kindness to me; but you know I serve God, and His word forbids what you wish me to do. Come, come, my dear girl, said her aunt moved by her tears, leave off these childish notions. I would not have you to do anything wrong: neither would your dear mamma, who is as religious as any one on earth can be: her beautiful letters to me were a pattern of piety—St. Paul himself did not write better—I could never read them without being moved

to tears. You know also how regular she is to her devotions—she never misses her church nor the ordinance; and yet, she is as delighted about this evening's party as an innocent child could be. Now, child, wipe away your tears, and go and see what is prepared for you. So saying she left the room, and Matilda retired to hers with a throbbing heart.

After sitting pensively for some time, she rose up to look at her dress: it was a beautiful lace one, with a white satin slip: a fine set of pearls with diamond clasps, and a blush rose for her hair, were also placed on the table. How kind it is of my aunt! thought she: O, what shall I do!—How can I refuse? Mamma and she will never forgive me if I do: and yet, what is their displeasure compared to that of the Lord? The temptation is too great—I cannot bear it! “*There is no temp-*

tation taken thee but that is common to man (whispered a secret voice); *and blessed is he that endureth it, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life.*" Well, then, said she, with a firm resolution, and rising from her chair, I shall not go; but suddenly her imagination pictured at once her aunt's kindness, her affection, the mortification and shame she would feel at her refusal, the effect it would produce on her and her mother, and the disappointment of the persons invited for her sake. I must go, she said with a feeble voice, and sitting down again with despondency: I cannot grieve to such a degree those whom I love so dearly; but it will be the last time. "*He who loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,*" whispered again the same voice. O, my God! exclaimed Matilda weeping, I love thee above them, and I will now

go and beg of my aunt to excuse me. So saying, she rose with resolution, and was going to leave the room when her eyes met a small miniature of her aunt, set in diamonds, which fastened one of the bracelets. How kind! she said again looking at it: O! I cannot refuse her this once—only this once and it will be the last. A knock at the door drew her from her reverie.

When the mind is pre-occupied time passes quickly, specially when it brings a dreaded hour; and the dinner, which was ready that day earlier than usual, was ready before Matilda was aware of it. The alteration of her countenance struck Mrs. Mansfield and her niece: and, fearing lest she should make herself ill, they treated her with increased kindness. How do you like your dress, my dear? said her aunt smilingly. O, it is very beautiful, dear aunt, said Matilda; far too beautiful for me; but

what I value most is the bracelet which contains my dear aunt's likeness, she said looking at her aunt with affection. I hope you are now more reasonable, said Mrs. Mansfield, and that I shall have the gratification of introducing my niece to our friends this evening. I cannot resist the power your kindness has on my heart, my dear aunt, said Matilda ; but do not be angry with me if I say that this must be the last time I shall ever enter a ball-room. Very well, child : I will not press you again, and you may do as you like after, said her aunt, who thought that, when her niece had once put her lips to the sweet cup of pleasures, she would be glad to taste of it again. Another favour I have to beg, dear aunt, said again Matilda, that you will not oblige me to dance. I cannot promise that, replied her aunt : it would be such a disappointment to our young gentlemen

who, no doubt, will be anxious of the honour of being your partner. My dear aunt, said Matilda, if I must dance I really cannot go. Well, well: you will not dance if you do not like, said Mrs. Mansfield, persuaded that Matilda would soon alter her mind when she was in the room.

PART II.—THE BALL.

THE time was now approaching when Matilda was to accompany her aunt and mother to the drawing-room to receive the company. Her emotion was great: for a few minutes she stood pensively before the looking-glass, not with the complacency and pride young people generally feel on such occasions, but with a consciousness that her present apparel was far from being in accordance with her feelings and with the Master whom she professed to serve;

and her only comfort was in repeating,
It will be the last time.

Are you ready, my dear, said the elegant Lady Samford, entering the room, attired in a rich blue silk dress trimmed with lace, and having her hair and neck adorned with a set of diamonds. Yes, mamma, replied Matilda ; and they both went down to meet their aunt, who was delighted with the modest elegance and innocent beauty of her grand-niece.

For the first part of the evening Matilda kept by Mrs. Mansfield, who was not a little proud of the well-deserved praises bestowed on her favourite ; but, notwithstanding the numerous and pressing invitations, Matilda persisted in her resolution of not dancing, which naturally led her into conversation with several persons who were no less surprised than charmed with her judicious observations and the knowledge

and good sense she manifested with much simplicity and modesty.

I wonder Miss Samford does not like dancing! said a gentleman who had been for some time watching for an opportunity of sitting down by her. It is not a pleasure I delight in, gently replied Matilda: I am only present at this ball to please my dear kind aunt, who would have felt much my remaining away; but I do not intend attending another. Why, Miss Samford, you do not mean to deprive the world of one of its most precious pearls? said the gentleman, who was somewhat acquainted with Matilda's views: it would be too cruel to have shown it to us to make us feel the more the loss of it; and surely, you cannot condemn an innocent pleasure, so natural to the whole animal creation, as can be seen in the winged tribes fluttering in the air, the cattle in the fields, the wild



beasts in the forests, and our domestic animals—all delighting in their frolicsome sports. And why should we, superior beings, be deprived of this innocent amusement? Nothing is innocent, replied Matilda, that tends to evil; and the flirtation, frivolity, and idle talk of a ball-room are certainly not calculated to improve the heart and mind. If you, superior beings, will compare yourselves with the inferior, you should then imitate them throughout. So we do, in a measure, said the gentleman; but, being endowed with a superior mind, we show our superiority by the refinement of our actions. We require the same necessities of life as they do, and are subject to similar infirmities: why, then, would you have us to share with them in their troubles only, and not in the enjoyments which have also been given us as well to counterbalance the other? What is the refinement

you boast of, said Matilda with a smile, which proves your superiority? We share with the brute creation hunger and thirst, it is true: they eat and drink what the bountiful hand of their Creator has allotted to each and are satisfied; but it is not so with the man of the world, who, before tables luxuriously loaded with dainties which excite his appetite beyond his natural power, and beverage which inflames his passions and often takes away his reason, brings himself down far below those inferior creatures which, each in its different degree, answers the end of its existence better than he who, created in the image of his Creator, to honour, love, fear, and serve Him, forgets Him altogether, to indulge in those miserable pleasures which in themselves are nothing but pride, vanity, and folly, and which, unable to satisfy the heart, take it away from its

right object, and lead the soul blind-folded into the path of perdition. You are rather severe, I think, Miss Samford, observed the gentleman; why should pleasures have been given us if it were not for us to enjoy them?

“ To man, then, only for his torment plac’d
The centre of delights he may not taste !
Like fabl’d Tantalus, condemn’d to hear
The precious stream still purling in his ear,
Lip-deep in what he longs for, and yet curs’d
With prohibition and perpetual thirst! ”

No ! replied Matilda, who was no less acquainted with the poem than the gentleman—

“ The precept that enjoins him abstinence
Forbids him none but the licentious joy,
Whose fruit, though fair, tempts only to destroy.

No pleasure ? Are domestic comforts dead ?
Are all the nameless sweets of friendship
fled ?—

Has time worn out, or fashion put to shame,
Good sense, good health, good conscience,
and good fame?

All these belong to virtue, and all prove
That virtue has a title to our love."

—(*Cowper*).

The pleasures we now enjoy are of that description, said the gentleman. Allow me to accompany you round the room, and you will see that there is nothing in this assembly that virtue can disapprove. With pleasure, said Matilda rising, and taking the arm of her partner, who led her to a quadrille, at the head of which was her mamma engaged in close conversation with a gentleman who was paying great attention to her: they had for *vis-à-vis* a little old baroness, who was striving to veil the ravages of time with the ingenuity of art, and who thought of concealing the number of her years by the levity of a girl of eighteen; while her young

partner, with feigned gallantry, was lavishing upon her the most ridiculous praises, exchanging, at the same time, significant glances with a black-eyed young lady then coquettishly whirling an *avant-deux* before them, with a tall, emaciated, well-starched *ci-divant jeune homme*, who was systematically kicking his cross capers with the gravity of a judge about to pronounce sentence on a criminal ; while the other dancers, gliding along in their turn with an amiable nonchalance, seemed unwilling to leave off a broken conversation. After a few minutes, the gentleman seeing on the countenance of his fair partner that this would not exactly answer his design, took her to another quadrille rather different from the first. Those who formed it appeared, by their liveliness and graceful movements, to enjoy their present amusement, except one of the number of those usually



designated by the appellation of old maids, who, with an air of affected dignity, viewed with jealousy and contempt her yet more favoured and younger companions, who were receiving with gratified vanity and assumed modesty the dangerous adulations and flattery of their senseless and frivolous partners.

One who particularly attracted the attention of Matilda was a young lady of about twenty who had a remarkably noble, open, and lively countenance; and who seemed to receive the attention paid to her as one accustomed to it, and who is more amused than flattered by it. Who is that pretty young lady with a pink dress and a wreath of fairy roses? enquired Matilda, pointing to her. She is Lady Sophia Morlington, replied her partner, an only daughter; her eldest brother, Lord William, was dancing with Lady Samford. She has another brother now on his honey-

moon trip to Italy; and her youngest, who has lately finished his terms at Oxford, and entered holy orders, is waiting for a living promised to him by an uncle; but this last young man is very different from the rest of the family—he is as grave and austere as the others are agreeable and fond of society.

As the quadrilles were now drawing to a close, Matilda expressed a wish to return to her place; but her partner, having proposed her taking some refreshments, she accepted. As he was about to enquire the result of her observations, several of the company entered the refreshment room, among whom was Lady Sophia; and soon after Lady Samford with Lord William, who, immediately approaching Matilda, said to her with an expression of regret—I am very sorry indeed, Miss Samford, you will not be persuaded to favour us with a quadrille: it is too bad to de-

prive us of such grace and beauty ! Though the lily of the valley conceals itself from the eye, yet, when found out, it does not disdain to delight us with its sweet and modest attractions. I did my best, said the gentleman who had accompanied her, to remove Miss Samford's prejudice ; but, I am afraid, without success. Matilda is rather shy, said Lady Samford, but I dare say she will know better by and bye—wont you, my dear ? Matilda, who would not contradict her mamma, merely replied with a smile ; and Lord William seeing a little embarrassment on her countenance, and wishing also to converse with her, offered her his arm, and crossing the ball room conducted her to a drawing-room in which a few tables had been elegantly furnished with different games, of which cards formed the principal for the elder part of the assembly who did not think

they could with propriety join any longer in the childish amusement of dancing, and who were making up for it by losing or gaining the glittering gold strewed on the crimson cloth, with an assumed indifference which, however well managed, often betrayed the feelings of the heart, either in the constrained smile of the loser, or the pretended sorrow of the winner.

They had not long been in the room when a loud voice warned them that some one was singing at the other end, to which they immediately resorted, and they saw there a lady singing a glee with an affectation which excited great laughter, which she attributed to the expression she was striving to convey. After having received, with an air of satisfaction, the praises, sincere or false, usually bestowed on such occasions, she rose from the piano, and Lord William immediately begged Matilda to gratify



them with a song, preparing at the same time her music which had been brought there by the order of her aunt. Matilda refused for some time ; but so many ladies and gentlemen joined their entreaties to Lord William's that she could resist no longer ; and, taking her seat at the piano, she sang with the sweetest expression the following verses which so well express the shortness of a transitory life :—

1.

The morning flowers display their sweets,
And gay their silken leaves unfold ;
As careless of the noon-tide heats—
As fearless of the evening cold.

2.

Nipt by the wind's untimely blast,
Parch'd by the sun's directer ray,
The momentary glories waste,
The short-liv'd beauties die away.

3.

So blooms the human face divine,
When youth its pride of beauty shows—
Fairer than spring the colours shine,
And sweeter than the virgin rose.

4.

Or worn by slowly rolling years,
Or broke by sickness in a day ;
The fading glory disappears,
The short-lived beauties die away.

The hearers, though more delighted with the melody of her voice than with the words, put no bounds to their praises, which were the more dangerous as they were sincere and merited ; for there is no heart, however humble, that is invulnerable to flattery : and Matilda, who had now become the object of general attention, unconsciously yielded to the allurements. Music, said she within herself, is not like dancing ; and I think I may, without sin, prove to my aunt that I value

her kindness in complying with her friends' wishes ; and, besides, this will be the last time. Comforting herself with the idea, she immediately performed at the request of the company a beautiful operatic overture, which Lady Sophia accompanied on the harp, and her brother on the flute ; and which, for a time, put a stop to the cards and dance.

Matilda now became more and more excited : her lovely countenance gradually lost its reserve as she became more animated, and her conversation more lively. Her beaming eyes expressed the pleasure she was taking in her present situation, and her aunt beheld with delight the fulfilment of her expectation. Matilda did not dance ; but, bewildered by the applause and gallantry of which she was the object, and the kind attention paid to her by the principal persons of the assembly,

who were anxious to second her aunt in weakening the religious feelings which were likely to draw her away from the world, she forgot, in her present enjoyment, her previous anxiety and fears.

At last the parting hour drew near, and, in a short time, this scene of mirth and pleasure had vanished into a silent solitude. How did you enjoy the evening, my dear ? said Mrs. Mansfield to Matilda. Do you know you have quite captivated Lord William ? He is regularly smitten. You were a naughty little puss not to dance ; but never mind, you made up for it afterwards, and I am very well pleased with you : give me a kiss and go to bed, for you must be tired, and we shall talk more about it to-morrow.

Matilda, who felt her aunt's approbation penetrate like a dart in her conscience, was not sorry to find herself

alone again, wishing to meditate over the past party ; but, when looking at her watch, she saw it was past four o'clock, she thought it was too late for observations ; and, taking up her Bible as usual, she tried, but in vain, to recal her wandering thoughts from the various scenes of the evening to raise them above. Her imagination roved from the ball-room to the drawing-room, and forcibly brought back to her mind the flattering compliments and attentions paid to her in the evening ; and she insensibly sank into a sweet reverie, when, with the sonorous clock of the old church at the time striking five, her friendly voice whispered again, "*The night is far spent, the day is at hand : cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light.*" She startled up, and knelt down ; but was no more successful with her prayers than she had been with her Bible. She re-

mained on her knees till she was nearly asleep: at last, discouraged, she laid herself down, and, being exhausted with fatigue, she soon forgot all till eleven o'clock, when her maid brought in her breakfast, and enquired how she was. She felt as people generally do after a night's pleasure—tired and poorly: but what people do not often feel, and what Matilda felt, was the consciousness that the gaiety of the night had ill prepared her for spiritual communion with her heavenly Father; and that *one could not tread upon hot coals without his feet being burnt*. She began to regret her having yielded to her aunt, and resolved more firmly than ever to do so no more.

PART III.—THE VISITS.

SOME time after the above-mentioned party, Mrs. Mansfield and her nieces received a visit from Lady Morlington,

with her daughter and two sons. Lord William, who had accompanied his mother from a desire of seeing Matilda, contrived to sit down by her, and, by his pleasing and insinuating manners, clearly showed that he was anxious of gaining her favour.

Allow me to introduce to you my brother Alfred, said Lady Sophia after some time of conversation, presenting to Matilda the Rev. Alfred Morlington, who had been silently observing her. We have not had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Morlington at our party, gently said Matilda. There was certainly a great inducement, replied Alfred with expression, but you know it would ill become a minister of the Lord to participate in the pleasures of the world, the pomps and vanities of which he had publicly renounced. You are right, replied Matilda blushing, and with the emotion of one who is conscious of the truth. Gra-

vity seems contagious, exclaimed Lady Sophia laughing, and Alfred would soon make Miss Samford as austere as himself, I see. I am sure, said Lord William, Miss Samford has too much good sense to exclude herself from society; for God can be served in the world as well as in seclusion. We cannot serve two masters, replied Matilda, the Prince of life and the prince of this world; for, whosoever will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God. Besides, I must confess that I am of Mr. Morlington's opinion; and a retired life is far more suitable to my taste than all the pleasures which the world can afford. Lord William was going to reply, when the ladies, rising to take leave, put a stop to the argument. I hope, my dear Miss Samford, said Lady Morlington affectionately taking Matilda's hand, we shall have the pleasure of your company at our little evening

party on Thursday next ? Matilda, rather confused, made no reply ; but, as Lady Samford and her aunt had accepted the invitation, her silence was taken for approbation.

What a lovely family the Morlingtons are ! said Mrs. Mansfield when they were gone. How gratified I should be to see my Matilda united to one of them ! Lord William is certainly a charming young man : do you not think so, my dear ? Yes, aunt, replied Matilda ; but I like his brother better. He has his merits, too, said Mrs. Mansfield carelessly ; but you must confess that, leaving even title and fortune aside, the former is far superior to him in amiability and good manners. That may be, replied Matilda ; but, for all that, Mr. Alfred possesses a treasure far more precious than gold and titles, and to which all things that can be desired are not to be compared.

I did not know I had a niece of such quick penetration, said Mrs. Mansfield, rather sarcastically : she discovers at a glance beauties where no one can find any ! The pearl of great price is found only by those who seek it, replied Matilda rather mortified. So you think you have found it in Mr. Morlington ? said Mrs. Mansfield with an ironical laugh. I have no doubt but he possesses it, said Matilda with spirit, and that is more than can be said of his brother with all his attainments. You express yourself rather warmly for a young person, drily replied Mrs. Mansfield ; but I must attribute your want of propriety to the retirement you have been accustomed to : a little more knowledge of the world will take away your plebeian notions, and I hope you will soon know how to appreciate Lord William's kind attentions ; for it has been very clearly intimated to me that it was through his

suggestions, and on your account, that their next party was to take place. I am sorry for that, said Matilda ; for I do not intend going. Not intend going said Mrs. Mansfield angrily : such a breach of decorum would never have been heard of ! You will think better by Thursday, I hope. Matilda, afraid of irritating her aunt, made no reply but she foresaw from that time the realizing of her previous fears.

It often occurs that protectresses expect an entire submission from their proteges, and that the least resistance to their wishes, however fantastical or unreasonable they may be, is immediately termed ingratitude ; and, in many instances, the protectress shows herself a tyrant, and the protegee becomes a slave. Matilda, who was endowed with a noble mind, was willing to please her aunt in every way she could do it without acting contrary to

her principles. Mrs. Mansfield, on the other hand, could not behold, without resentment, her will opposed by a girl of nineteen, on whom she had bestowed, as she thought, great and wonderful favours in taking her from comparatively humble circumstances to raise her to the position of a daughter ; and her wounded pride began to make her grow cold towards Matilda.

Lady Samford, who greatly dreaded the effects of the displeasure the resistance of Matilda would cause to her aunt, used every means in her power to induce her daughter to be more yielding—pointing out to her the advantages her submission would afford to them both, and the sad consequences her obstinacy would expose them to. If you have no pity for yourself, have at least some for your mother ! said Lady Samford weeping. But, dear mamma, said

Matilda greatly moved, I do not see what difference I can make to you. I am young—I can bear hardship : let me enter some family—there I shall not be under obligation to any one ; and you, dear mamma, remain with our aunt, you can please her better than I do ; and then I shall have the satisfaction of being no more a source of vexation to those whom I love. Cruel child, exclaimed Lady Samford, is this the way you acknowledge kindness ? O, let not this last wish escape your lips before our aunt : do not tell her, at least, that you prefer servitude to her bounties !

Matilda was much affected with her mother's grief, and not less with her aunt's displeasure. In her sorrow she wished for Angela—her friendship would have been a great comfort to her ; but, having no one to sympathise with her, she drew more closely to Him

who sticketh closer than a brother; and, committing all her ways into His hands, she patiently waited for His direction.

Thursday came. Mrs. Mansfield, who had still entertained the hope that her niece would yield again as at first, had had a new dress prepared for her; but this time Matilda remained immoveable, to the sorrow of her mother, and the inexpressible vexation of her aunt who knew not how to repress her anger.

We cannot go without Matilda, said Mrs. Mansfield to Lady Samford. Why not, my dear aunt? replied Lady Samford who wanted to soothe her aunt: the countess will certainly be offended if none of us go; and we can easily pretend an indisposition for Matilda who really looks very poorly; and I am also certain we shall more easily bring her to better views, by appearing to let her have her own way, than by opposing her. Kindness has great power



on her: I know she greatly values yours; and I have no doubt that, with a little management, we shall find her more submissive. Mrs. Mansfield approved of her niece's idea, and both prepared for the evening.

I shall not describe the disappointment the absence of Matilda created to the family, and particularly to Lord William who anxiously expected her; and no less also to Alfred who, contrary to his custom, had remained in the drawing-room to receive her on her arrival; but, though disappointed at not seeing her, her motive for remaining away, which he rightly attributed to another cause than indisposition, increased the impression she had already made on his heart. However, not wishing to interfere with his brother, who he knew intended making her an offer, he carefully concealed his feelings.

The next morning at breakfast, Ma-

tilda, who expected to see a frown on her aunt's brow, was surprised to see her with a smile on her countenance, and still more so when she told her that she had invited Lady Sophia to come and spend a few days with them; and that she hoped she would do her best to entertain her, to which Matilda readily assented.

Some days after Lady Sophia came, accompanied by her eldest brother, who expressed to Matilda his regret at the indisposition which had deprived them of her company; and, after having spent the remainder of the day with the family, he left them, having first received an invitation to repeat his visit.

Though Matilda and Sophia were of different dispositions, they, nevertheless, soon became united by an affection which was founded on their mutually kind and amiable temper, and the sound knowledge which was to them an inex-

haustible source of entertainment. Sophia, notwithstanding her liveliness began to feel the power the true spirit of religion has on the mind ; but, at the same time, she could not help reproaching her friend with being rather too strict. But, observed Matilda, our Creator rightly requires our whole heart and mind ; and, if they are divided between Him and the world, how can they be His ? Then, in this case, replied Sophia, we must all become nuns and hermits ; for it is impossible to live in society without having our affections and minds somewhat taken by some object ; and, besides, are we not commanded to love one another ? Yes, replied Matilda ; and, if we love God, we shall love our brother also for His sake but, by the love of the world, we understand the things which are contrary to the Spirit of God ; such as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride

of life, which are said to be not of God, but of the world. And you know, dear, that whatever we do in word or deed, whether we eat and drink even, we are to do all to the glory of God: so that, if I ask myself the question, Am I acting to the glory of God? my conscience will soon decide. When to please my dear aunt, I consented to attend the ball she so kindly gave for me, I could not help for some time considering the dress I had on, and remembering the words of St. Paul—"I will therefore that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but which becometh women professing godliness with good works." I was conscious I did not look like one of my Saviour's flock; and when observing the various scenes of the evening I felt convinced the Lord had no part in them. Must we, then, be deprived of

every kind of enjoyment? observed Sophia. By no means, replied Matilda. Our enjoyments usually proceed from the things we take pleasure in, and are founded on our affections: if these, therefore, are set on the things that are above we shall naturally delight in the things that are spiritual: if, on the contrary, they are set on the things of the earth, our enjoyments for the same reason will be of an earthly sort. Tell me sincerely, my dear Sophia, if after a day's pleasure you feel equally disposed to approach God and read His word? To be sure I do, answered Sophia: I say my prayers and read a chapter quite as easily after any party as I do on a Sunday; and I think, my dear Matilda, you feel a difference because you are not accustomed to it yet; but when you have seen a little more of the world, you will think nothing of it I can assure you. I easily believe you, replied Matilda with a smile, our adversary is

very accommodating : he has no objection to an outward religion so long as we allow him a little corner in our hearts, and I confess that that peaceful indifference would frighten me more than a conviction of guilt.

Lady Samford and her aunt, who saw with pleasure the intimacy of the two young friends, and who were desirous of entertaining their young visitor, and likewise of familiarising Matilda by degrees with the manners of the world, gave a few parties at which several young persons of the neighbouring places were invited, and which Lord William and even Alfred also attended ; but, as they did not wish to frighten Matilda with dancing, to which she seemed to have such a particular objection, the evenings were generally spent in conversation and music.

Matilda, whose mind was richly cultivated, derived little pleasure from the society of many of the young ladies,

some of whom had little more to converse about than dresses and new fashions, or to sit like dolls dressed up for drawing-room ornaments; while others, thinking themselves prodigies of erudition and wishing to be thought so by others, ostentatiously displayed, with much volubility, the general information with which their happy memory was furnished, not omitting skilfully to introduce now and then a few sentences of the various languages of which they had acquired some knowledge. At first they gained their end, but their desire of exciting admiration, making them forget the reserve and modesty suitable to their sex, soon proved them to be conceited prattlers. Some who did not possess these qualifications, and who were no less anxious to attract attention, employed what is commonly called wit, but which is generally a refined way of ridiculing the absent to amuse the present; and often of provoking

laughter with the sharp sting of satire and sarcasm.

Then, when adverting to the general conversation, the common subjects usually were new operas, first-rate singers and dancers, to whom were joined first-rate preachers and popular ministers. Here, was a dissertation on the last published novels ; there, a discussion on some doctrinal points of last preached sermons ; in a word, it mattered very little what they talked about so long as they talked about something. Matilda was quite a novice among them all, and was more desirous of avoiding than taking part in their conversation. This caused her to be considered by some stupid and ignorant, and by others proud and bigotted ; but Sophia and her brothers knew better how to appreciate her, and, in order to enjoy her company the better, they often formed a little circle of their own.

PART IV.—CONCLUSION.

WHEN Sophia returned home, Matilda was the constant topic of her conversation: she could not say enough in her praise: her piety, gentleness, kindness, patience, information, talents, &c., had made a great impression on her: she had never met with her like before. How proud I should be of such a sister! she exclaimed one day as they were sitting at tea: she would be a treasure to any man, and especially to a clergyman, she said, suddenly turning towards Alfred who felt somewhat abashed at the sudden apostrophe. Thank you for your kind suggestion, smilingly replied Lord William; but I think I need her most, for Alfred is already converted, while I want a wife to convert me! Oh! replied his sister, thoughtlessly; but I think she is more partial to Alfred, for she greatly admires his

piety and religious sentiments, which, she says, are quite in accordance with her own.

Alfred tried with some difficulty to conceal his feelings by fixing his eyes upon the book he held in his hands ; for he loved Matilda, but he avoided as well as he could to show it, lest it should affect his brother, who, being the eldest of the family and the beloved of his father, had acquired a rather despotie disposition.

Lord William, accustomed to follow his own inclinations, little consulted those of others ; and he thought also that his title, fortune, and personal attractions would be a sufficient claim to the hand of any lady he should favour with his addresses ; so that he felt rather mortified at his sister's observation. Did she say anything about me ? enquired he forcing a smile on his lips. Nothing particular, ingenuously replied Sophia ; and then a silence ensued, dur-

ing which Lady Morlington, who was a person of sense and penetration, easily discovered the feelings of her sons towards Matilda, for whom she had also conceived much affection.

Alfred, who was of a kind and affectionate disposition, was, as is often the case with the youngest, the favourite with his mother; and in her motherly love and discernment she considered that Matilda would be a more suitable match for him than for his brother; therefore, to decide the question between the two brothers without giving offence to either, she resolved, without saying anything to them, to invite Matilda on a visit, which she did shortly after.

Matilda was at first rather unwilling to go, but the countess so kindly assured her that they would make her quite at home—that they would have no other company than that of their own family—and that she would be

treated like one of them, that she at last consented to accompany her. Her aunt did not forget, before she left, to instruct her how she was to behave, particularly towards Lord William.

Matilda, who enjoyed homely circles far above balls and evening parties, soon felt quite at home ; and her lovely countenance bore the expression of the pleasure she experienced from the kindness and attentions of the family who were equally delighted with her ; and the few weeks she then spent with them greatly contributed to increase the high opinion they had already conceived of her heart and mind.

When the last week came for Matilda to return home, Lord William, who was afraid of losing her, declared to his mother his intention of asking for her hand before she left them, but he was rather at a loss how to do it : he had attempted it several times and his courage had always failed him. If you

like, said Lady Morlington, I will speak to her for you ; but, my dear, before you take such a step, I would advise you to consider well whether you think you would be suitable for each other. Miss Samford possesses every quality that could be wished for ; but you must not forget that she is as pious as she is accomplished, and that she has as great an aversion for the world and its pleasures as she delights in retirement and the society of private friends. Do you think that such a disposition would agree with yours ? Would you be happy with such a wife, and could you make her so ? Certainly, replied Lord William : I value her too much not to do everything in my power to make her happy. You may think so now, observed Lady Morlington ; but I am sure she could not accustom herself to your way of living, which you could not give up ; and, to speak to you with sincerity, I think she would suit your bro-



ther far better than you. I thought so ! bitterly replied Lord William—I always see your preference for Alfred. Well ! then I will not trust anybody—I shall speak to her myself—I have a right to do so, at least. Certainly ! meekly replied Lady Morlington, and you will also feel more satisfied ; but do not be offended if you are refused, nor angry with your brother if he is more fortunate.

The next day, Lord William sought the opportunity of speaking to Matilda, and taking her for a ramble in the park conducted her to a summer-house, that he might not be disturbed ; and, after talking of different subjects, he at last came to the point. Though Matilda somewhat expected it, yet she felt a little embarrassed at first : she thought of her aunt's exhortation, though she did not wish to be led by it. She loved Alfred, but did not know whether he loved her in return, for he had always

been very reserved with her. However, recovering herself, and leaving all considerations aside, she only thought of her duty: therefore, with much simplicity and good feelings, she gently expressed how unsuitable she felt herself to be for a person of his rank and fortune. I could not, said she—with a sweet expression which partly removed the bitterness of a refusal—I could not unite with you in the society and pleasures, whether at home or abroad, which your situation in life requires; neither could I bear to see you seek your happiness and joy away from your home. Excuse my sincerity; but, if I am some day to unite my fate with another's, I should wish to find in a husband a friend in whom I could place an entire confidence, and that cannot be unless our views and sentiments are in accordance with each other; for where there is no sympathy there can *be no happiness*. Do you not think

so? Could you renounce your way of living for mine? Or could I, with the conviction that I should be offending God, give up mine for yours? I leave you to judge. You are right! said Lord William with deep emotion—you are right, my dear Miss Samford. I am not worthy of you—you deserve one more like yourself—one who possesses more of your virtues. Title and fortune are nothing when compared to your inestimable qualities. I would gladly give them all up this instant for the hope of obtaining one day the hand you now refuse me; but I feel my mother's judicious observations, and am convinced that the man of her own choice, and who, out of regard for me, so nobly concealed the love and esteem he shared with me, is more worthy to possess so pure a heart. What do you mean? enquired Matilda with astonishment. I mean, replied Lord William, *that if I must lose you as a bride, I*

may, at least, entertain the hope of some day calling you sister. Some voices, which were heard close to the spot, came very *à propos* to relieve Matilda from the confusion into which the last part of Lord William's speech had thrown her.

The persons then approaching were Lady Morlington, with Sophia and Alfred, who looked rather surprised at the *tête-à-tête* ; but Lord William, thinking the moment favourable, though with a heart deeply wounded with disappointment, contrived to say to his mother with a noble dignity natural to him, I think, mamma, we are all of your opinion that Alfred is better qualified than I am for Miss Samford ; and, as I am pretty sure of their mutual feelings, I hope I shall be more successful this time, if, as an eldest, I beg for my brother the hand which was refused to me. I thank my generous *brother*, exclaimed Alfred with surprise

and deep emotion, for being so nobly my interpreter ! And then, taking Matilda's hand and looking at her with an expression of hope and fear, said, What is the reply ? All this had taken place so suddenly and so unexpectedly that Matilda, confused, could not find a word to say. . I read on Matilda's countenance that silence gives consent, said Sophia joyfully. Is it so ? my dear Miss Samford affectionately enquired Lady Morlington. If mamma and my aunt give theirs, replied Matilda with timidity, I shall not withhold mine.

I shall now leave to my young readers to picture to themselves the joy of the whole party, including even Lord William, who was the first to call Matilda his sister ; and I shall only add, in a few words, that Mrs. Mansfield was very indignant at first, when she heard that her niece had so disregarded her advice ; but finding every party satisfied she *thought* she had better be so too, and

show herself generous in bestowing a handsome marriage portion on Matilda, who was married a few months after. Her husband received his expected living, which, to the great joy of Matilda, was near Richmond, not far from the spot where she had spent her two happy years. She again took possession of her pretty villa which her mother made her a present of; and she and her husband, making it their sole business to promote the cause of their heavenly Master—the one by preaching, and the other by teaching and visiting the poor, and superintending two schools she had established for the benefit of the poor children—they had the inexpressible satisfaction to see the number of his congregation increase rapidly and show forth the fruits of the Spirit. They were often visited by Sophia, who also found in religion more real enjoyments than in the boisterous pleasures of the world. Angela and Amy had likewise

seen with joy the return of their friend.

Mrs. Mansfield died two years after the marriage of Matilda, leaving all her property to Lady Samford, who, yet young and beautiful, had previously accepted the offer of a wealthy baronet.

THE DISSOLVING VIEWS:

AN ALLEGORY.

MAMMA, dear mamma, said little Fanny one day to Mrs. Fairfax, you promised once to take me to the Polytechnic Institution. I have heard so much of that place that I quite long to see it. Well, my dear, said her mamma, I will take you there this evening if you like. O, thank you, mamma ! said Fanny : O how glad I am ! When the time was come, Mr. and Mrs. Fairfax with their daughter took a coach, and in a short time were transported to that truly scientific place.

Fanny was highly delighted with

everything she saw, and kept her papa's time well employed in giving her the explanation of the various interesting things with which the place abounds. She dived beneath the water, was electrified, heard a lecture on chemistry, and many other things which would take too long to relate ; but the last things she saw, and which were not least in her estimation, were the microscope and dissolving views : these last, particularly, quite bewitched her.

First View.—O, papa, said she to Mr. Fairfax, what a beautiful place this is ! Look at that splendid building in the midst of it : it is like a palace or ancient temple. What people are these ?—some wear long gowns ; and others, who look remarkably warlike, wear short coats of mail, with glittering helmets on their heads. My dear, said Mr. Fairfax, they are two different nations ; but, before this view vanishes, just look at that group coming out of the temple. O\

said Fanny, what a beautiful young virgin ! How noble her countenance is !—what modesty, love, patience, and resignation are impressed on it ! By her white robe, and the long white veil which covers her head, one would take her for a bride. So she is, replied her papa : she is betrothed to the Son of a mighty King, and the men you see with her are the ambassadors who are to escort her to his court.

Second View.—Here is a change of scene, papa : the Bride is now entering a ship on a very rough sea ; and her attendants seem to protect her from the attacks of an infuriated multitude who look as if they would tear her to pieces. Some soldiers are dragging two of her party, but there stands by her a noble-looking man as if determined to defend her at the peril of his life. I hope they will get her safely to her journey's end.

Third View.—Please, mamma, what place is this ? It is quite different from

the first, though I recognize the same warlike men I saw before ; but the palaces, temples, amphitheatres, are not the same : the sculpture is beautiful. This, my dear, replied Mrs. Fairfax, is a great city into which the Bride is now entering. Do you see her yonder, with her little troop ? Yes, mamma, I do, said Fanny ; and her attendants are more numerous than they were when she first started. I wonder who she is ! Do tell me, dear mamma. No, my dear, I wish you to find it out yourself ; but, while you are thus chattering, you do not see the new scene now passing before you.

Fourth View.—Oh, how awful it is ! —streams of blood running down the streets, blazing piles consuming, and wild beasts tearing men and women— instruments of rack and torture in every direction, and the massacred are the attendants of the Bride ! There lays beheaded that noble-looking man who

so courageously defended her; and there she is kneeling on the top of a mountain with her eyes lifted up to heaven. She has yet a few men left with her, but they do not seem the same.

Fifth View.—Oh, oh!—this is a more cheerful scene. What glorious king is that seated on a throne?—he appears as a defender of the Bride. How sumptuously he entertains her!—what honours he bestows on her attendants!—they are now as richly clad and exalted as they were before humble and abased. Is this the king she is to marry? No, my dear, said Mr. Fairfax; but she had to pass through his dominions, and he retained her on her way.

Sixth View.—Oh, dear papa, what is that? Look at those splendid men in long purple robes: some seem to be walking about, and others worshipping a woman who looks like a queen; for she is dressed with purple and scarlet, and decked all over with silver and gold,

and all sorts of pearls and precious stones. Look at the crown which is upon her head : there is something written on it in large characters, but I cannot make out what it is. What a multitude of different nations are bowing down to her !—and kings are laying down their crowns at her feet. Pride, despotism, and cruelty, are impressed on her forbidding brow : whoever can she be ? My dear, replied her mamma, she is a concubine of the king you saw before, who, jealous of the attention he paid to the Bride—who indulged here longer, perhaps, than she ought to have done—turned her away ; and, at the death of the king, she took the reins of the government, and swayed her sceptre over the kingdoms of the earth, enticing, by her fawning looks and deceitful words, their inhabitants into her grasp. And where is the Bride, papa ? There she is, my dear, going down the other side of that snowy mountain, with her

face covered up with her veil. Dont you see her? O, yes, papa, I do, but very indistinctly: she appears almost lost in the snow.

Seventh View.—Well! what is this, now? On one side is a man burning alive on a pile; and, on the other, a doleful dungeon, out of which comes another man, as if going to appear before that great assembly of men clothed in scarlet robes. The two men you see, replied Mr. Fairfax, are some of the attendants of the Bride, who came to try to persuade some to increase her escort, as she has great dangers to encounter on her way, all men having turned towards the Queen; but the Queen, who is the deadly enemy of the Bride, alarmed on hearing of the proselytes they made, quickly dispatched those servants of hers in putting them to death; for the man now standing before the judges will undergo the same fate as the other. Poor Bride! exclaimed Fanny; it would have

been better if these two men had not left her. Why ? said her papa, dont you see that company travelling a long way off ?—they were gained by these men, and are now going to the Bride ; so, for two lost, she has gained thirty.

Eighth View.—What a view this is ! O dear ! it must be an earthquake I am sure. Look at the Queen, papa ; she seems staggering on her throne, and she is holding with one hand her crown falling off her head ; and those who were worshipping her a little while ago are now going away from her, and her servants are running after them with fire and sword in their hands as if to frighten them back. See with what rage she looks upon that man in black, standing afar off before her, and who seems to set her at defiance ! That man, my dear, said Mr. Fairfax, is one of the servants of the Bride, who, by his powerful eloquence and the cogency of his arguments, has shaken the throne

of the usurping Queen, turned the hearts away from her, and drawn them to the Bride; and the Queen, full of fury, threatens them all with death and desolation, and is sending, as you see, a mighty army over the snowy mountain to destroy the Bride and her followers. Oh ! the wicked Queen, papa ; I hope she will not succeed.

Ninth View.—O, papa, is this a fleet ? Look what a number of ships are following the first which bears a white banner. It looks like it, does it not ? said her papa ; but, if you observe, each vessel has a different flag: the first is that which conveys the Bride, and the others the numerous people from every nation, who, through much conflict and many struggles, have joined her. Look on your right: you will also see at a distance the isolated palace of the Queen. I think we have two more views—to these I beg your attention. Look at this.

Tenth View.—Oh, papa, how terrible!—the whole world seems in a blaze! See the nations and people writhing together in the flames with horror and anguish!—and the part which belong to the Queen, how much higher the smoke is rising! What frightful and doleful creatures are hovering over it! Oh, papa, this sight is awful—I cannot bear it: I hope the next view will soon come to take the place of this. O! here it is.

Eleventh View.—What a contrast! O, papa, how beautiful! This is beyond any thing I ever saw before. What glory!—what splendour! May I ask you, papa, who is that dazzling Being so full of majesty and love, sitting on a throne more resplendent than the sun, with thousands of glorious beings ministering unto him? He is, my dear, replied Mr. Fairfax, the Bridegroom, waiting for the Bride; and his arms are now open to receive her. Where is she,

papa ? Dont you see her ? O, yes, papa, I do : I see her now with her numerous train ascending on a bright cloud ; but the reflection of the Bridegroom's face shining upon them made them appear as one, they are so dazlingly white. O, how I should like to be one of them, papa, they all look so happy ! So you may, my dear, if you follow the Bride through her tribulations, and shrink not from difficulties, nor suffer yourself to be enticed by the allurements of the wicked. But now, the curtain is drawn, it is time to return home.

First View.—Jerusalem ; the temple ; Jews and Romans : the Bride is the Church of Christ.

Second View.—The Church persecuted out of Jerusalem.

Third View.—The Church at Rome.

Fourth View.—Persecutions under the Roman emperors : Paul beheaded.

Fifth View.—The Church protected

by Constantine the Great, and the clergy greatly exalted.

Sixth View.—The Church of Rome governed by popes (Rev. xvii., 4, 5, 6); the Christian Church concealed in the vallies of Piedmont.

Seventh View.—John Huss and Jerome of Prague; the Church persecuted by the Church of Rome.

Eighth View.—The Reformation; Luther; Inquisition; the Waldenses persecuted.

Ninth View.—The disciples from all nations who have joined the Church of Christ.

Tenth View.—The end of the world (2 Pet. iii. 7, 10, 11, 12); the judgment of Rome (Rev. xviii).

Eleventh View.—Rev. xix. 7, 8, 9-21; xiv. 9, 10, 11.

THE VISION OF A DAY :

A TALE OF FANCY.

As I was rambling on a beautiful day in the beginning of November, after the morning fog had cleared away and had allowed the sun to cheer once more the inhabitants of the earth with its vivifying beams, I perceived afar off a solitary traveller with a staff in his hand, sometime standing still on the top of a mountain, as if contemplating the remaining beauties of nature ; and then, lifting up his eyes to heaven as if returning thanks to the Giver of all good for the rich blessings He had poured upon the earth in the year which was now drawing to a close. There was

something in the stranger's appearance which created in me a singular sensation, and prompted me to follow after him to observe him nearer ; so I hurried forward, when, all at once, I lost sight of him : however, on reaching the top of a hill, I saw him again ascending slowly a steep mountain : then, hastening down, I soon reached him. His body, though tall, was bent under the weight of years, a beautiful silvery beard hung down upon his breast, his head was bald, and his countenance benevolent.

Good old man, said I to him as soon as I drew near, you appear weary and tired : let me help you up this ascent : youth ought to be the support of old age. Willingly, said the old man, placing one hand on my shoulder and leaning on his staff with the other, for I feel the end of *my year* is also drawing nigh. I have seen three seasons, and my fourth will shortly be past ; while thou, my

pretty lassie, hast scarcely gone through thy spring yet ; but remember that, swift as the eagle that hastens to the prey, so is time hastening upon thee, blooming maid. Look at these trees, which, but a few days ago, shot forth their buds, blossomed, and of which the rich foliage afforded the most delightful shade to the weary traveller : they are now stripped, having nothing to gratify the eye but their bare wood which soon will be buried under the frosty snow : so does Time, in its relentless course, renew and change the face of nature !

While thus talking, we came to the summit of the mountain, which was crowned with a wood, on the border of which my aged companion invited me to sit down by him. I loved to gaze on his venerable face, which bore the reflexion of the sun which was then vanishing behind the mountain clothed in his rich crimson robe, and gave him *the appearance* of one about to undergo

a glorious transformation. Good old man, where are you going? enquired I. *Home!* replied he—with an angelic smile. And where is that—is it yet far off? asked I. No, said he, lifting up his arm, and pointing to heaven—*it is there!* Then, putting his withered fingers between my locks, he fixed his eyes pensively upon mine, heaved a sigh, and a tear ran down his furrowed cheeks. Why weepest thou? said I with astonishment. Because, said he with a sorrowful look, I read on thy countenance, though so sweet, that thou art not going to the same home, and answerest not the end of thy existence! Young girl, continued he taking one of my hands in his own, hearken to a dream which, sixty years ago, I had in this very same place: that time sounds long to thy ears, but to me it appears as of yesterday.

I was then young, feeding on folly and vanity as thou art, and my ardent

imagination saw nothing but pleasure and delight in the long series of years which the usual life of man promised me. It was towards the end of the month of August when nature stands in her glorious apparel, beautiful as the rose which charms the eyes and refreshes the air with its fragrant perfume; and majestic as the lily, which raises its head above its fellow-flowers. Accustomed to the noise and amusements of cities, the stillness and retirement of a country life had no charm for me; and one day, to kill the time which lay heavy upon me, I took a ramble into the woods. After a few hours' wanderings I came to this spot, the sight of which struck me with admiration. I stood and gazed on the surrounding beauties which surpassed the splendour of kings' palaces. Over my head was a clear, blue, celestial sky, with its resplendant star casting a golden hue over the emerald carpet.

widely spread under my feet, and making the waters, winding through the vallies below, appear as a river of diamonds sparkling through the trees which bordered its banks. The numerous herds and flocks scattered on the plains, the birds warbling in the boughs of the trees, the variegated butterfly fluttering in the air, all bore an appearance of peace, rest, and happiness which charmed my senses ; and, to contemplate more leisurely those beauties so new to me, I sat down in the shade, and shortly after I fell into a deep sleep ; when I dreamt that I heard a voice saying :—Seest thou the heavens above, the earth beneath, the rivers that water the earth, the beasts of the field, those of the forests, the winged tribes of the air, the inhabitants of the seas ? All answer the end of their existence and fulfil the will of their Maker ; but is it so with thee, O young man, created for the glory of thy Creator—to love, ho-

nour, and serve Him? Astonished, I rose up to see who was speaking, when a bright cloud enveloped me, and a dazzling Being stood before me: his countenance was full of grace, majesty, and love; the words of His mouth were sweet and powerful; and His eyes like a penetrating fire which set my heart in a flame. He held in one hand a crown of gold, and in the other a cross, a sword, and a shield. Follow me, said He, and this crown shall be thine, with immortal life and everlasting happiness. Troubled and terrified, I fell at His feet and cried: I will follow Thee; but how can I? By taking up this cross, replied He, and following the narrow path thou seest at a distance: it will lead thee to my kingdom. Fear not the trials which will befall thee in the way: my eye shall watch over thee and my invisible hand shall uphold thee: only be thou faithful—trust, and be not afraid. With this sword thou shalt fight my enemies,

and this shield will make thee invincible. I shall require the remainder of *thy year* to be spent at my service, and a place in my glorious kingdom will be thy reward.

All at once I heard behind me another but terrible voice, crying out: Follow me! for thou art my subject, and I will not give thee up. I can also give thee a kingdom, with riches, honours, pleasures, and ease. I turned round and beheld deep darkness, in the midst of which was a blazing being with chains in his hand, and death was at his feet. He was pointing to a large city beneath, which I had not observed, and said: This is a portion of my wide kingdom, which I will bestow on thee *now* if thou wilt serve me: thou shalt not have to go through the dangers which attend the road to the one promised thee. I will make thy ways smooth and easy, and strew thy paths with flowers. For how long, said I?

All thy life time, said he. And then ?
said I. Death gave a grin, and a gulf
of fire opened its mouth and swallowed
them both. Upon which I woke, and
a gentle voice whispered within me :
Choose now between life and death—
the cross and immortality—or pleasures
and a fire which will never be quenched.

A GLANCE

ON THE PRIMITIVE AGES.

By a roughly-built altar, on which were consuming the remnants of a sacrifice which had lately been offered, sat a man remarkable for his great age, his noble stature, and the manly beauty which was yet perceptible through the marks which many years of sorrow and toil had impressed on his furrowed brow. His elbow was resting on the goat skin which formed his only garment, and his hand supported his hoary head. By his side was one considerably younger, who seemed to listen to him with filial respect ; and to try to dispel, by comfort-



ing words, the cloud which dimmed his venerable face.

Dismiss thy sorrow, O my father ! said the young man with a heavenly expression : all hope of happiness is not lost for ever ; the blood of the victim still smoking on this altar bears witness that there is yet an atonement for our sins and forgiveness with our God. Heaven will again be opened to thee, and the blessed place from which thou wast banished.

Oh ! my son, replied the old man with a feeling of the deepest grief and regret, to thee heaven is open ; for thou walkest with Him, and obeyest His commands in the midst of this perverse generation ; but I, I who shall for ever bear the reproach of all the evil now abounding in this world once formed for the happiness and comforts of man and now cursed for my sake, and filled *with violence* and corruption through *my disobedience* and guilt—how can I

be forgiven? How can I be comforted when I behold the wickedness of my generations which now overspread the earth, and conscience within me says that it is I, the father of them all, who have brought this evil upon them, and shut to many the gates of heaven?

Cursed serpent! whose deceitful guile seduced the companion whom my Creator in His loving kindness had given me to be my helper and delight, and to raise on the earth a pure and holy seed to praise and glorify Him: thou now beholdest with infernal joy the progress of thy deadly venom, and thy eager eye feeds beforehand on the victims of thy rage, who will one day be partakers of hell, thy dwelling-place!

Woe, woe to me! for my folly and weakness in yielding to her entreaties! But she was so fair, so beautiful; and the thought of knowing as much as our Maker had such charms! O wretched pride! The forbidden knowledge I

sought has brought upon us all the death I was warned against !

My father, said the young man looking up to him with emotion and love, reproach not thyself with the destruction of mankind: they now possess the same will and power, which was then in thee, to choose between good and evil, and to resist or yield to them. If thou hast fallen, thou mayest be raised again ; and does not the voice of the promised seed, which is to crush our adversary and restore us to the blissful state for which we were created, cry to us from this altar—" *Fear ye not, ye children of man : if sin has brought death into the world, life shall also come by me ; look up to me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am your salvation ?*"

Blessed be thou, my son, replied the father of mankind to his son of the ninth generation: these, thy words, have flowed like a healing balm into my wounded heart ! Yea, I feel there is yet

hope for me in heaven! He who formed me pure and holy, like Himself, will look down with compassion on the work of His hand. I have marred His image in me; but, O thou blessed Seed, exclaimed the aged man falling on his knees and lifting up his feeble hands and eyes to heaven, thou wilt restore it again to me, and to my seed after me! On these smoking ashes I adore and bless thy name; for, though this body of mine shall soon return to the ground out of which it was taken, yet through thee I shall see my God, and my eyes shall again behold my Maker!

Not many days had passed away after this intercourse when, against the altar, was seen the young man standing pensively by a freshly turned mound of earth, which had just received the mortal remains of his departed parent; and not many years afterwards this same righteous man was himself taken from the destructive storm which divine justice

was gathering over the rebellious inhabitants of the world.

How great, how awful, is the power of the Mighty who at His will can create and destroy ! Who can resist Him ? Who can say, my life is my own, death shall not come nigh me ? I will reign—I will conquer—I will delight my soul and gratify my heart with every pleasure which this world can afford—I will make to myself a name which shall last to the end of time, and my posterity shall not be extinguished !

Ye foolish mortals, while ye indulge in vain hopes, ambition, sensuality, and lusts — while you form a thousand schemes to promote the happiness of an uncertain futurity—while you picture to your ardent imagination visions in accordance with the carnality of your hearts, Death standeth at your door, an unwelcome messenger who spareth *none*, and regardeth neither age nor *youth*, splendour nor poverty !

In vain you make sure your gates against him ; in vain you struggle with him ; in vain you grasp one another to unite your strength for better resistance ; in vain you take refuge in caves and the most secret recesses of the earth ; in vain you climb to the top of the steepest mountains and reach the highest summits of the loftiest rocks ; in vain the tender mother fleeth with her suckling child, pressing it to her bosom as to protect it from the approaching death ; in vain the bridegroom shields with his body his newly-married bride with whom he had anticipated many years of joy and love ; in vain the old man implores the young to help him in his flight—all, all must fall before the implacable enemy now appearing in his most appalling form.

The fountains of the great deep are broken up, the flood-gates from above are opened, and torrents of water rush down with violence from every part of

heaven: the unceasing flashes of lightning and the uninterrupted sound of the roaring thunder contribute to increase the horror of the terrific time which is to continue till the earth has swallowed up every vestige of life and human industry, and is prepared afresh for the reception of the righteous man, whom God has spared from the general destruction, when he will come out with his small family and the few living creatures preserved with him to replenish the earth.

But why is he saved alone? Among so many thousands, was he the only righteous? Warned of the threatening danger, did he not warn others of their approaching ruin? Yea, he did warn them: a preacher of righteousness, he went about exhorting the people to repent and flee from the coming judgment; but he was unto them like one *that mocked*. Multitudes came to see *the marvellous building* he was con-

structing, and pitied his credulity and the madness of his undertaking ; while others, less hardened, enquired into the design, and, moved at the report, resolved to forsake their ways and serve the God they had so long neglected. But the resolution was but of short duration : the end of all things was long coming : the sky continued bright and clear and showed no sign of a storm : each year brought forth a plentiful harvest and the earth did not withhold her increase : the sun, and the moon, and the stars continued their course and answered the purpose of their creation till the day of vengeance came, and they saw, but too late, the fulfilment of the preacher's prediction.

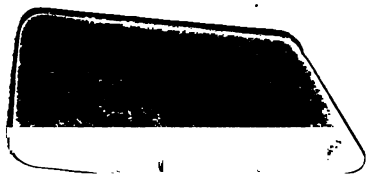
Mercy ! mercy ! exclaim the reprobrates ; but the time for mercy is over. Open ! open to us ! cry the distracted, heart-rent multitudes, clinging to the ark of refuge as it was gently raised from the earth by the increasing waters :

but the door is shut up, and all admittance impossible ! Then cries of torture, anguish, and despair are heard from every side. But soon, they who had gained the highest points are, in their turn, washed away, and the mournful silence which ensued announced to the privileged family that the inhabitants of the earth and of air have ceased from under heaven !

“ As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.”







THE FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM

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